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Chair: Mr. Ramírez Carreño ..... (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela)
later: Ms. Özgür (Vice-Chair) ..... (Turkey)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 56: Comprehensive review of special political missions (A/72/357/Rev.1)

1. **Mr. Zerihoun** (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions (A/72/357/Rev.1), said that special political missions continued to face challenges in implementing their mandates safely and effectively as they operated in rapidly evolving environments characterized by uncertainty and volatility. Modern conflicts were enormously diverse and involved competition over State institutions, natural resources and territory. The regionalization of conflict added layers of complexity to efforts to resolve them and some conflicts had seen the rise of political narratives and actors such as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Boko Haram which rejected the modern conception of the State.

2. Against that backdrop, special political missions fulfilled a variety of functions in the areas of peace and security. At the national and regional levels, they had advanced political transitions; supported governance; strengthened institutions; promoted democratic processes; and created effective preventive measures. The Secretary-General's report detailed a variety of developments for special political missions, from the completion of the initial mandate in Colombia and the establishment of a follow-up verification mission to the expansion of the mandates of several panels of experts, and strategic assessments and adjustments of missions in Libya and Somalia. The report also addressed policy issues arising from, or made more urgent by, trends in the mandates and operating environments of special political missions. One issue was the effectiveness of special political missions in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. The Secretary-General had called for a reorientation of the Organization's work around a universal agenda that had injected renewed energy into efforts to strengthen the conflict-prevention role of the United Nations, as conceptualized in the resolutions on sustaining peace, which called for a focus on preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict.

3. Special political missions were key to the effort to strengthen the Organization's work on conflict prevention. The integration of a range of disciplines, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform, human rights and institutional capacity-building, into the work of special political missions was a strong example of the Organization working as one in support of prevention. The research conducted by the panels of experts was an invaluable source of information for the Security Council and underpinned the sanctions regimes as key preventive tools. The recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture provided a detailed agenda for increasing the effectiveness of special political missions. Meanwhile, the announcement by the Secretary-General of a surge in preventive diplomacy and the establishment of a high-level advisory board on mediation had provided fresh impetus.

4. A second important policy area was partnerships between special political missions and regional and subregional organizations. The time had come to strengthen such partnerships and ensure close collaboration on early warning and analysis, preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution on the basis of the principles of transparency, mutual accountability and comparative advantage. Significant progress had been made in the relationship between the African Union and the United Nations in the area of peace and security cooperation, guided by decisions of the Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union. Collaboration had also been enhanced with the European Union, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the League of Arab States. The regional offices of the United Nations had also made progress in building operational relationships with their counterparts.

5. A third area of focus in the report was the women, peace and security agenda, where the efforts of the Department of Political Affairs to deploy more gender expertise in special political missions had met with significant, if incomplete, success. The impact on the work of the missions had been tangible in the form of a gender-disaggregated approach to the planning, execution and monitoring of the implementation of the mandates of special political missions. The Department would continue to support missions so that they fostered the role of women in mediation and peacemaking efforts and the political participation of women. As the focal point for electoral assistance, the Department provided support for electoral processes, including through special political missions targeting the medium- to long-term objectives of increasing the capacities of electoral bodies and addressing challenges to the credibility of electoral processes, which were key to sustaining peace and preventing conflict.

6. The report also addressed efforts to improve geographical distribution and gender representation in special political missions, and enhance transparency, accountability and efficiency in the implementation of

mission mandates. The Secretariat had made efforts to ensure that missions were broadly representative of the membership of the United Nations. Some progress had been made to improve the representation of women in special political missions but it needed to be accelerated if the Secretary-General's gender parity goals were to be met. The report also addressed the safety and security challenges faced by special political missions, and highlighted some of the impediments preventing missions from implementing their mandates in difficult security environments. The security threats faced by United Nations staff had been revealed by the murder in March 2017 of two members of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as four Congolese citizens accompanying them as they researched arms trafficking, the activities of armed groups and human rights abuses.

7. Governing bodies would be considering the reform proposals put forward by the Secretary-General in recent months. While Member States deliberated, special political missions would continue to play a critical role in the peace and security toolkit of the United Nations. It was therefore vital to maintain a sharp focus on special political missions and the conditions required for their success, including international and regional political backing, relationships and entry points. The Department would continue to work closely with the Committee to take stock of achievements and challenges and to seek advice on the way ahead.

8. **Mr. Khare** (Under-Secretary-General for Field Support), paying tribute to the courage, dedication and sacrifices of those serving in special political missions, said that the extremist attack that had killed over 20 people in Mogadishu the previous weekend, coming only two weeks after a truck bombing had killed over 350 people there, was a stark reminder of the volatile environment in which they operated.

9. The Department of Field Support worked closely with the Department of Political Affairs in supporting special political missions spanning a wide range of peace and security responses undertaken by the United Nations. Although the missions differed in size and scope and had their own specific requirements, they were equal clients within the framework of the support delivered by Department of Field Support to all field missions. Special political missions were usually much smaller than peacekeeping missions and had smaller administrative and logistical support structures, but they were frequently deployed to remote and often insecure environments with unique complexities in support and supply chain management.

10. Over the previous year, the Department of Field Support had supported the closure of the United Nations Mission in Colombia and its replacement by the new United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, which was expanding its presence across the country to respond to the additional mandate to monitor the ceasefire between the Ejército de Liberación Nacional and the armed forces. In Libya, the Department was providing dedicated support to the United Nations Support Mission in Libya as it returned an international presence to the country and prepared for a geographical expansion of its operations. An innovative support concept was being developed to support a rotating core of international staff in Tunis with remote back office support, providing valuable lessons for future special political missions. The Department of Field Support had also supported the Department of Political Affairs in planning new missions or expanding existing ones in Burundi, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen and in assessing existing missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as in identifying opportunities for partnerships with regional organizations and other United Nations system entities.

11. The objective of the Department of Field Support remained the delivery of rapid, efficient, effective and responsible support for field missions, including special political missions, through a focus on supply-chain management, environmental management, technology and innovation, measures to combat misconduct, and field-oriented reform of business processes in the United Nations Secretariat. The Department had made progress on all those fronts by developing a set of mission support performance indicators specific to special political missions. Furthermore, the global client survey was a useful tool for measuring the quality and responsiveness of the support provided by the Department. In the most recent edition of the survey, 71 per cent of respondents across all field missions had expressed overall satisfaction, up from 65 per cent in 2016. However, the survey had also highlighted areas such as business processes where efforts must be focused. Those efforts would have greater prominence under the Secretary-General's management reform agenda. The Secretary-General had made it clear that the United Nations must become a field-focused organization through three fundamental shifts, namely, improvements to planning and budgeting processes; the delegation of more authority to managers; and the adjustment of management and support structures. Those measures would empower the field; align accountability, authority and resources; and address duplication and fragmentation at Headquarters, thereby enabling special political missions to deliver on their mandates and be more accountable to Member States.

12. Several proposals in the management reform initiative related to special political missions, including the creation of a separate budget section for special political missions and an increase in the threshold for unforeseen and extraordinary expenses. Such changes should enable the Secretariat to better support special political missions during the critical early stages of deployment, and should improve the presentation to the General Assembly of annual requirements for special political missions. The implementation of the reforms proposed by the Secretary-General would enable the Organization and its special political missions to tackle current challenges more effectively and prepare for future challenges.

13. **Mr. Maleki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the Secretary-General had indicated in his report that, since taking office, he had made crisis prevention a core theme that cut across the work of all parts of the Organization. He had also indicated that regional and subregional organizations were often better positioned to detect potential crises early and inform the United Nations accordingly. His delegation wished to know whether the United Nations was using other monitoring mechanisms to detect crises before they broke out and how the Organization intervened. It also wondered which activities of special political missions consumed most of the budget.

14. **Mr. Halfaoui** (Morocco) said that the landmark twin resolutions on sustaining peace of 2016, Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/262, were the result of the review of the peacebuilding architecture. However, the Peacebuilding Commission had not been mentioned at all in the Secretary-General's report, not even in connection with Burundi and Guinea-Bissau, where country configurations were already in place. He asked whether that omission had been deliberate or whether there was absolutely no interaction between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned in the report and the Peacebuilding Commission.

15. The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) would reportedly be working with regional partners to review the United Nations regional strategy to combat the threat of the Lord's Resistance Army after the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the eastern part of the Central African Republic had left a security vacuum. It would be interesting to know whether UNOCA could have acted in advance to prevent that security vacuum from arising, and whether there were any plans to find another troop-contributing country for that particular mission. Furthermore, it would be useful to know the level of engagement of UNOCA in the African mediation initiative.

16. **Mr. Méndez Graterol** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that it would be interesting to hear about the most common difficulties encountered in relations between special political missions in the field and host Governments, and how those difficulties were overcome.

17. **Ms. Mejía Vélez** (Colombia) requested further information on the establishment of a separate budget section for special political missions and future plans for those missions given their large number.

18. **Mr. Zerihoun** (Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs) said that, at the last count, there were 35 special political missions, some of which were regional offices, some were field based and some were the offices of special envoys and sanctions Committees. The most recently opened regional office, UNOCA, had been requested by the nine States that were members of the regional organization, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), in a letter to the Secretary-General. The main function of special political missions was to provide good offices and engage with regional counterparts to support regional efforts and add value to them. Prevention had two specific pillars, namely, early warning and early action. Governments could seek assistance with a wide range of issues from the respective United Nations country presence and could also instigate a United Nations engagement specifically for the purpose of receiving technical support and expertise when they were engaged in mediation. National institutions and actors from political parties to civil society, academic and research organizations also raised issues with special political missions and asked for United Nations engagement.

19. Regarding the issue of the Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African Republic, the Secretary-General had expressed regret at the sovereign decision by the Government of Uganda to withdraw its troops, but other partners had also taken similar decisions. UNOCA was the focal point for United Nations support and engagement on the Lord's Resistance Army and worked closely with ECCAS in coordinating efforts in the region and beyond. Depending on the kind of special political mission and the conditions in which it was deployed, in some countries there was a United Nations-sanctioned peace process, but in others attempts were still being made to bring the parties together. The role of the missions was generally perceived as being supportive and as adding value. In the Central African Republic, the Department of Political Affairs was working with the United Nations mission on the regional dimension of the conflict and was also engaging with the African Union to support its initiative on the resolution of the conflict in that country.

20. He could not explain the omission of a reference to the Peacebuilding Commission but the Department of Political Affairs did work closely with the Peacebuilding Support Office, and special representatives from the Department routinely reported to the Peacebuilding Commission. The partnership of interdependence between the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Department had been appreciated by countries affected by conflicts. Under the Secretary-General's new restructuring proposal, one idea was to bring the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Department of Political Affairs together.

21. **Mr. Khare** (Under-Secretary-General for Field Support) said that the budget for special political missions for 2016 had been set at $561 million, of which $317 million had been spent on civilian staff costs and $214.9 million had been spent on operational costs. As the second largest cost driver, operational costs included spending on safety and security. Guard units were needed because special political missions were often deployed in areas even more volatile than those of peacekeeping operations. Aviation services were a major operational cost because of the need for quick and urgent movement in places where that was not possible by commercial means. Another important cost driver under the heading of operational costs were costs relating to the preservation of life through the provision of generators, water, sanitation and health care in locations where staff were confined to green zones where accommodation and services were limited.

22. The challenges encountered by special political missions included the fact that they were sometimes deployed to countries without a mission agreement in place; difficulties in managing relations between guard units and local security agencies, especially in countries where local security was not fully developed; and issues relating to the exemption from taxation for contractors providing food and other supplies since people at the working level did not always fully understand the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

23. All special political missions were in the resource envelope in section 3 of the regular budget, which dealt with political affairs in general even though missions were considered separately from the rest of the budget. It had been proposed to present all special political mission budgets in a separate section of the regular budget to be considered at the same time as the regular budget. However, the budget for special political missions was considered annually because it was practically impossible to predict their needs two years in advance. Consequently, the Secretary-General had proposed a shift to an annual, rather than biennial, regular budget. As such, the proposal involved two major areas of reform: an annual budget, within which a special section would be devoted to special political missions. Delegations were invited to read paragraphs 73 and 74 of A/72/492/Add.1, which summarized the proposed budgetary changes.

24. **Mr. Halfaoui** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the Movement supported all efforts aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of special political missions and welcomed the adoption of the landmark twin resolutions on sustaining peace: General Assembly resolution 70/262 and Security Council resolution 2282 (2016). The sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all States must be respected, with the United Nations as primary guarantor of the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. The principles of impartiality, consent of parties, national ownership and national responsibility should also be respected. Field-based missions must have clear and achievable mandates formulated on the basis of objective assessments and not conceived in haste without a political basis or sufficient resources. Integrated planning and consistent approaches linking policy formulation and implementation on the ground were critical for success. The Secretary-General should give further consideration to transparency, balanced geographical representation and the representation of women in senior leadership positions, particularly as special representatives and envoys and in the membership of expert groups on sanctions. Efforts to achieve gender parity should be mirrored with regard to regional representation and balance.

25. Consensus on issues related to special political missions was vital, and only matters that had been agreed by Member States collectively should be implemented. The General Assembly remained the most representative body to discuss overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, a fact that was particularly relevant in the context of ongoing reform. In that regard, the Secretary-General should hold an interactive dialogue to address such areas of major concern as the impact of proposed reforms on field-based missions; safety and security; regional offices; guard units; and procedures for mandating special political missions. The main points covered in the dialogue should also be included in the next report of the Secretary-General on the current agenda item. In order to enhance budgetary efficiency and transparency, the same criteria, methodology and mechanisms used to fund peacekeeping operations should be applied to financing special political missions, for which a new

separate account should be established. Hence, the Movement supported the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel concerning the arrangements for funding and backstopping special political missions.

26. **Mr. Begeç** (Turkey), speaking also on behalf of Australia, Indonesia, Mexico and the Republic of Korea, said that asymmetrical threats to international peace and security, together with unpredictable and complex crises, posed a global threat to sustainable development. Field-oriented, resource-effective United Nations action was necessary to increase the overall success of the Organization and maintain its relevance as the nature of conflicts evolved. Special political missions were a vital tool in that regard and they needed to be better prepared, equipped and deployed in a timely manner to ensure fulfilment of mandates. To that end, cooperation and coordination across the entire United Nations system and with host countries must be enhanced. Security Council resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/262 had provided the Organization with the necessary guidance for sustaining peace, which was a mandated task that must be assumed collectively with the primary responsibility for priorities, strategies and activities lying with national Governments and authorities. Consultations should continue to be held on the implementation of the concept of sustaining peace.

27. As missions transitioned from peacekeeping to political or special political missions, it would be vital for the whole continuum of peace to be adequately resourced materially, financially and politically. Such matters required further discussion and support, including in the Fifth Committee. Other reform initiatives of the Secretary-General, including management reform, the repositioning of the United Nations development system and his call for a surge in preventive diplomacy, should be viewed as streams of a general, comprehensive process and were all interconnected.

28. The expectations of the international community, and by extension of the United Nations, were at an all-time high against the current backdrop of multiple armed conflicts. Special political missions were a major component of the Organization's efforts towards sustaining peace. Enhanced coordination and interactive dialogue with Member States were key to improving the contribution of such missions. The engagement of the United Nations should take into account all aspects of a conflict, in particular the safety and security of Organization personnel, the protection of civilians, the role of women and youth, and partnerships with regional and subregional organizations. Thanks to its expanded programmes and projects funded by the Peacebuilding Fund, the Peacebuilding Commission was now able to more efficiently assume its role as bridge and convener among all United Nations organs, mechanisms and facilities.

29. **Mr. Bonser** (Canada), speaking also on behalf of Australia and New Zealand, said that, if current trends continued, by 2030 more than half the world's poor would be living in countries affected by high levels of violence. Hence, preventing and resolving armed conflict and promoting efforts to sustain peace should be the top priority of the United Nations. Preventing countries from lapsing into cycles of conflict would prevent immense losses in human life and would preserve crucial economic and development gains. Preventing conflict was the reason why the United Nations had been created and constituted a collective responsibility. In that light, special political missions, whether deployed in preventive settings or in overseeing political transitions, represented the most operational expression of the political efforts of the United Nations in the field. They were an effective tool at a relatively low cost. The role of such missions was particularly crucial in the transition out of peacekeeping missions, where there was an ever-present threat of relapse.

30. With transitions looming in Liberia, Darfur and Haiti, the experience of Sierra Leone could be instructive. A series of progressively lighter special political missions had provided critical support for national peacebuilding capacities over a period of nine years, at a fraction of the cost of the peacekeeping mission that had preceded them. Similarly, when assessing risks of conflict and designing responses, the United Nations should deploy a spectrum of operations, including special political missions, which should be highly customized to the country context.

31. In line with the recent sustaining peace resolutions, the Peacebuilding Commission should support the development of mandates for special political missions, in particular their role in transition contexts. Such mandates should ensure that longer-term peacebuilding challenges, including the achievement of gender parity, were taken into account in the early stages of design. The Peacebuilding Commission should also help facilitate partnerships within and outside the United Nations system to address those challenges in a coherent manner. Adequate resources for special political missions were a prerequisite for their effectiveness. It would also be important for their peacebuilding components to be adequately financed.

32. **Ms. Krisnamurthi** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that special political missions were crucial tools in the context of complex, rapidly changing and increasingly demanding challenges to global security.

The General Assembly should play a more meaningful oversight role with respect to such missions, and ASEAN supported efforts to tackle the root causes of conflict, improve United Nations expertise and enhance transparency, accountability, geographical representation, the gender perspective and the role of regional organizations. While reform of the Organization's peace and security architecture was important, that process should be integrated with other reforms, such as the reform of the United Nations development system and management reform, in order to break down the persistent silo mindset within the Organization. The host country had primary responsibility for advancing its national peacebuilding initiatives and it was critical to build the capacities of State institutions so that all legitimate national stakeholders could contribute meaningfully to a shared national vision. However, a coordinated and sustained effort by the entire United Nations system was also vital, as were efforts to strengthen partnerships between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations as well as with non-United Nations stakeholders.

33. The equal participation of women should become an integral part of all stages of the peace process. The newly created Task Force on Gender Parity and Equality in the United Nations System was a welcome addition to such efforts, which should include the appointment of more women to senior leadership positions in the Organization, in particular as special representatives and envoys and as members of United Nations country teams. Robust capacity-building and adequate financial support were needed for all activities on the peace continuum; moreover, it would be wise to explore aligning the budgetary considerations of special political missions with those of the peacekeeping operations cycle. A special and separate account for the funding of special political missions on an annual basis should be created. ASEAN supported efforts to increase the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of special political missions.

34. Speaking in her national capacity, she said that Indonesia supported the elevation of the peacebuilding perspective by recasting the Department of Political Affairs as the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. That structural shift should be accompanied by strengthened mediation and prevention elements as well as by a stronger accountability framework and more responsive service delivery, especially with regard to conflict-affected countries. It was also important to harness civilian expertise in conflict mitigation, particularly from countries that had successfully transitioned in democracy, peacebuilding and development. The experience of qualified, readily deployable civilians would be critical to the success of both the sustaining peace and sustainable development agendas, which were inextricably linked.

35. While South-South cooperation played an important role in development, it had been less visible in international peace and security, and it was high time for the United Nations to pay greater attention to South-South cooperation, alongside triangular cooperation, to reinforce activities on the peace continuum. Triangular arrangements offered stakeholders the opportunity to diversify their assistance in settings not previously accessible to them. Indonesia encouraged the Department of Political Affairs and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to explore new approaches for special political missions.

36. **Mr. Castañeda Solares** (Guatemala) said that the new strategic plan of the Department of Political Affairs covering the period 2016–2019 was an important tool for ensuring that special political missions were tailored to specific needs on the ground. Strategically planned mandates based on national contexts and specific priorities would allow special political missions to evolve over time, with successive stages designed based on results. The Organization should develop more realistic policies adapted to each country. To that end, the Department should focus on the three primary goals of strengthening international peace and security through conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding; deepening and broadening partnerships within the United Nations system; and guaranteeing the efficiency of the Organization. Prevention should take priority and that required stronger policies and appropriate resources. Addressing the root causes of conflict was essential for ensuring sustainable peace. Member States had not invested sufficient effort in that regard, and the United Nations had not intervened early enough in the crises that had erupted.

37. Support for the implementation of peace agreements, for inclusive political processes with the participation of women, minorities and other groups and for peaceful elections overseen by the countries concerned was essential to build a sense of ownership on the part of all stakeholders involved in peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Special political missions played an important role in the search for sustaining peace, which should be understood in the broadest sense as both a process and a goal. Guatemala welcomed the efforts to enhance the efficiency and coherence of special political missions, and stood ready to continue working in both the Fourth Committee and the Fifth Committee to make progress in that regard.

38. **Ms. Martinic** (Argentina) said that special political missions were increasingly serving as tools for

accomplishing a wide range of United Nations mandates in areas including preventive diplomacy, supporting peace processes, assisting in the establishment of justice mechanisms, monitoring the implementation of Security Council sanctions regimes and building peace. For reasons of transparency and accountability, the General Assembly should be involved in all policy matters pertaining to special political missions, most of which were created by the Security Council.

39. Her delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's efforts to reform the peace and security pillar and welcomed the new emphasis on prevention as part of the evolving narrative of sustaining peace. It encouraged the Secretary-General to continue consulting Member States on the reform. The proposal to merge the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs, as well as continued progress in evaluating the political and operational aspects of special political missions, should pave the way for consideration of the relevant financial aspects, and her delegation supported the creation of a separate account, the establishment of an annual budgetary cycle and access to the support account for peacekeeping operations. Discussions on those matters in the Fifth Committee had been at a deadlock for six years, but her delegation hoped that goodwill would allow progress to be made. Lastly, her Government fully supported the peace process in Colombia and would continue to participate in that process through the new United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia.

40. **Ms. Rivera Sánchez** (El Salvador) said that, some twenty-five years after signing a peace agreement, El Salvador had embarked on a new peace dialogue that aimed to include all stakeholders in the country. Although that process was not a special political mission, it offered several constructive lessons. The roots of conflict could be traced not only to economic differences but also to cultural, racial, religious and political ones, with the latter most often the trigger for violence. Peacebuilding therefore involved fostering a culture of dialogue and conflict resolution, without which peace agreements were often short-lived. Special political missions needed sufficient political and financial support to enable them to fulfil their peacebuilding and peacekeeping mandates in a manner that ensured respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States. The budget for such missions had increased dramatically in recent years and was distorting the regular budget. A special and separate account should be established for special political missions, with annual budgeting, funding and reporting, to ensure transparency and prevent budgetary distortions.

41. To improve their functioning, special political missions must have clear, achievable mandates that took account of the situation in the country concerned. The transition from special political mission to peacebuilding required a clear exit strategy that allowed local actors to assume responsibility for sustainable peace and development. Consultations involving all relevant stakeholders, including the Security Council, the Secretariat, contributing countries and the host country, were important to allow progress and prevent duplication of efforts. The General Assembly, however, remained the most representative body for discussions on general policy issues related to special political missions, and all policy decisions concerning such missions should be reached by Member States by consensus.

42. Her delegation called on the Secretary-General to promote mechanisms that would allow countries with positive experiences in peacebuilding to share them with those currently hosting special political missions. El Salvador had progressed through several phases in its process of national reconciliation and stood ready to share its experiences with other countries while welcoming input on how to address the challenges remaining as it sought to build a peaceful, safe society. Her country firmly supported the work of the special political mission in Colombia and would continue to work for peace and stability in that country.

43. **Ms. Mejía Vélez** (Colombia) said that the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Colombia had ended on 25 September 2017, marking a milestone for both her country and the United Nations. In overcoming the obstacles inherent to the conclusion of an armed conflict that had lasted more than five decades, many lessons had been learned that underscored the need to support efforts to modernize the peace and security pillar of the Organization's work.

44. Both that first special political mission and the new Verification Mission had been the result of a process shaped by Colombians for Colombians with significant support from the international community and the United Nations. The need for a tailor-made process adapted to the reality on the ground had been emphasized in resolutions and reports of both the General Assembly and the Security Council, which sought to establish the best parameters to secure a sustainable peace. Peacebuilding was a complex task that would be more comprehensive with the active participation of women, as women and girls had played an important role in the insurgency and would be the beneficiaries of peace in rural areas. Mainstreaming gender would be important in conducting peacebuilding initiatives, addressing the challenges that emerged from

peace negotiations, preventing conflict and creating a lasting and stable peace. Twenty per cent of the members of the country's first special political mission had been women, who had participated as civilian observers and unarmed military members, one of the highest percentages in the world.

45. Changes must be made to the operational aspects of the Organization's peace and security pillar to ensure achievement of the mandate set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. For that reason, her delegation supported the integration of peace and security reforms into administrative reforms to provide resident coordinators and country teams with greater authority and autonomy. Sufficient administrative tools and financial and human resources must always be available on the ground. To that end, a process must be established to evaluate the effectiveness of peacebuilding missions. Mission outcomes could be critical to the escalation or resumption of conflict and to the maintenance of a stable and lasting peace. Integrated reform of the United Nations system was imperative for better functioning and for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Peacebuilding Commission was an ideal mechanism for increasing effective diplomacy to improve the Organization's capacity to respond to emergencies, humanitarian crises and threats to international stability.

46. *Ms. Özgür (Turkey), Vice-Chair, took the chair.*

47. **Mr. Elangovan** (India) said that the high number of peacekeeping missions and special political missions reflected the fragile situation of global peace and security. Almost all of those missions were deployed in countries that had experienced internal armed conflict, often involving non-State actors, which demonstrated the vastly transformed nature of peacekeeping within the United Nations. The primacy of politics in conflict prevention and resolution was widely recognized, and a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace was required to integrate peacekeeping and political solutions, enhance governance and emphasize long-term sustainable development. To achieve lasting solutions, the process must be inclusive and respect the principles of impartiality and consent of parties and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. United Nations peacekeeping operations could only succeed with the commitment, responsibility and engagement of all Member States. It was regrettable that policy formulation for special political missions remained opaque. Member States must be involved in formulating and renewing mandates through genuine and transparent consultations with the Security Council, and the Department of Political Affairs should organize more interactive briefings. The ongoing review of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan would benefit from input from the broader membership.

48. The current funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions were seriously undermining the effectiveness of those missions. Despite being the most utilized United Nations mechanism for addressing crises around the world, special political missions were not incorporated in the Organization's regular budget cycles. A regular budget was required for core prevention and mediation capabilities and it was time to set in motion a process for the establishment of a separate account for special political missions. Financing their needs through the same criteria, methodology and accountability as that used for United Nations peacekeeping operations would enhance budget transparency.

49. **Mr. Zehnder** (Switzerland) said that, as one of the Organization's most important preventive tools, special political missions would play a key role as the Organization shifted from response to prevention in its peacekeeping operations. However, peace and security could not be achieved without giving equal weight to human rights and development. A comprehensive and inclusive approach that integrated the three pillars of the Organization's work was the best way to create resilient societies and reduce violence. In that spirit, in June 2016, Switzerland and 70 other Member States had launched an appeal to the international community to put human rights at the heart of conflict prevention by using instruments from the human rights pillar for prevention. Its implementation should strengthen synergies among the various United Nations tools for preventing conflict and sustaining peace. With regard to the funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions, pragmatic improvements such as those recommended by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions would ensure efficient management and increased effectiveness of those missions, enhance transparency, avoid duplication and facilitate oversight. His delegation looked forward to substantial progress in that regard in the context of the ongoing reform discussions.

50. **Mr. Sauer** (Finland), speaking also on behalf of Mexico, said that special political missions lay at the heart of conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. As such, they must have the capacities and resources required to implement their mandates effectively so that the United Nations was responsive, efficient and effective in preventing conflict and sustaining peace. Finland and Mexico welcomed the Secretary-General's report on overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions (A/72/357/Rev.1) and his emphasis on the surge in preventive diplomacy and

mediation. They also strongly supported the increased focus on women's equal representation and full gender parity. It was important to keep the Sustainable Development Goals in sight as they linked the work of the United Nations on all three pillars. In addition, the work of special political missions in preventing conflict and sustaining peace must not be overlooked in the discussions on reforming the Organization's peace and security architecture.

51. Given that a strong resolution had already been achieved in 2016, the only update in the draft resolution on the comprehensive review of special political missions (A/C.4/72/L.10) was a technical correction, namely, the amendment of footnote 6 to refer to the revised report under the current agenda item, contained in document A/72/357/Rev.1. Member States were urged to support the draft resolution, which constituted an important tool for peace.

52. **Mr. Ikiara** (Kenya) said that Kenya fully supported the Secretary-General's call for a surge in diplomacy for peace and his continued focus on entrenching preventive diplomacy in the work of the United Nations. Kenya attached great importance to conflict prevention and mediation at the subregional, regional and global levels, as its work to resolve conflicts in its region over the years had demonstrated.

53. The ongoing work of the United Nations regional offices and field-based missions was commendable. The disturbing growth of transnational threats such as terrorism, violent extremism, human trafficking and irregular migration meant that the United Nations must be flexible and proactive in order to respond effectively. The creation of a dedicated United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism was a step in the right direction; the new Office should deepen collaboration with special political missions, particularly in countries affected by terrorism and violent extremism. Kenya supported the Secretary-General's initiatives to reform the peace and security architecture and move from a reactive model to one focused on prevention and sustaining peace. Enhanced cooperation between and within the relevant United Nations entities would reduce fragmentation and help to entrench the new mindset.

54. The success of special political missions in maintaining international peace and security depended on sustainable and predictable funding and coordination at all levels. The relative success in Somalia over the previous year was a testament to what special political missions could achieve when a nation, a subregional organization, a regional organization and the international community worked together. However, much more could be achieved with sustained, predictable funding, and nurturing of the country's nascent political institutions. Strong partnerships between special political missions and regional and subregional organizations had a critical role in sustaining peace; moreover, balanced implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development across the three pillars would eliminate fragmentation and allow for sustainable peace.

55. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) said that special political missions must be established on a case-by-case basis involving analysis of the situation in the country concerned. They should be governed by policies developed democratically by the General Assembly, which should play a decisive role in all matters related to their establishment, implementation and monitoring. All missions must have a clear and achievable mandate, with realistic objectives, as well as material and financial resources appropriate to the situation in the field.

56. In order to adapt special political missions to the situation on the ground at the time of establishment, the United Nations should conduct a thorough analysis with the participation of all Member States. The missions must be in strict compliance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular those relating to respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States, and non-interference in their internal affairs. The adoption of new special political missions should not affect the Organization's regular budget. Instead, the General Assembly should have a comprehensive debate to arrive at a differentiated mechanism for financing those missions, potentially based on the same criteria, methodology and mechanisms as for the financing of peacekeeping operations, including the establishment of a separate account. Furthermore, the Secretary-General should produce an annual report on special political missions in which the subject was comprehensively addressed, with transparency and accountability guaranteed.

57. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that the General Assembly played a critical role in maintaining international peace and security by providing the Secretariat with guidance on policy matters pertaining to special political missions, which were particularly important given the unprecedented rise in the number of civil conflicts. The General Assembly should hold regular, inclusive and interactive dialogues on overall policy matters pertaining to those missions and should ensure that the missions were created, implemented and monitored through consultations held in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, in particular, the principles of impartiality, objectivity, inclusivity, respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in

the internal affairs of States. The Secretariat should contact Member States in a timely manner prior to holding those dialogues and should provide them with relevant, detailed information. The views of Member States should be taken into consideration by the Security Council and the Secretariat when creating or reviewing the mandates of special political missions. Eritrea looked forward to receiving a more comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the measures taken by the Secretariat to enhance the effectiveness and ensure the transparency and equitable geographical representation of such missions.

58. **Mr. Sekito** (Japan) said that special political missions were powerful tools for addressing the entire conflict spectrum. They could engage preventatively, bolstering national efforts in the areas of peacebuilding, security and justice reform, and institution-building. For instance, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel had worked successfully with the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union to defuse electoral tensions in the Gambia. Special political missions were equally important in managing conflict and sustaining peace; for example, the United Nations Mission in Colombia had supported a historic peace agreement that had ended a half-century of conflict. All special political missions required strong support from Member States and the international community, as well as host country ownership. To be successful, special political missions needed well-designed mandates. To that end, the Security Council needed to determine actual needs on the ground, and should carry out periodic strategic reviews in conjunction with the wider United Nations membership in order to assess performance and define clear goals and initiatives for each mission. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's reform agenda for the Organization's peace and security architecture and the development system.

59. **Mr. Nasir** (Maldives) said that special political missions were strong instruments for United Nations diplomacy but needed more investment from Member States to provide them with the required expertise, financial and political capital, and clear mandates. State-building should be a major component of the mandates of both political and peacekeeping missions. Such missions should build the capacity of States to govern, first and foremost, and then their capacity to foster order rooted in the principles of democracy, good governance and inclusive development. State capacity was also needed to develop institutions, create a shared vision for the country and mobilize and sustain support for that vision. Empowering women should become a key focus of special political missions, because mounting evidence showed that gender equality in decision-making concerning peace and security resulted in higher chances of sustaining peace.

60. The efforts of special political missions must reflect a deep understanding of and engagement with the people they sought to help. In that regard, while cooperation with regional and subregional organizations was important, the mandates of special political missions must be established on the basis of host country priorities. Moreover, they must be clear, consistent and tailored to the unique political, economic and social situation of each host nation, which was best evaluated through continuous engagement from conception to completion of the missions. The extent of the political support that special political missions received from Member States was often a decisive factor in their success, or failure; the Maldives therefore stood ready to work with the United Nations to ensure that special political missions were successful in preventing conflict and sustaining peace.

61. **Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia) said that Ethiopia fully supported the Secretary-General's call for a surge in diplomacy for peace and welcomed his initiative to reform the Organization's peace and security pillar. However, the Secretary-General needed the full backing of the General Assembly and the Security Council, and he should therefore continue to consult Member States on the reform agenda, which would reinforce trust. Addressing institutional fragmentation and ensuring coherence across the United Nations system was essential to ensure that conflict prevention and sustaining peace were at the heart of the Organization's work. In that regard, the Secretary-General's commitment to reforming the management and development fields was welcome. His delegation looked forward to working with the Secretary-General on reforms in areas that required the approval of Member States, including issues related to structures and finance.

62. The United Nations needed to enhance its cooperation with regional and subregional organizations to promote and maintain international peace and security. The commitment of the African Union and its regional mechanisms to respond to crisis situations and take greater risks for the sake of regional peace offered a positive example of burden-sharing with the United Nations and of concrete results achieved at lesser cost. Indeed, greater appreciation of the complementarity and comparative advantages of the United Nations and regional and subregional mechanisms would greatly help to overcome challenges and ensure more dynamic partnerships based on a pragmatic and flexible interpretation of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. The recent signing of the Joint United

Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security was encouraging, but there was still a lot of room for improvement if the full potential of the partnership was to be realized, including through joint analysis of conflict situations and joint assessment missions.

63. **Mr. Zaayman** (South Africa) said that special political missions had become indispensable instruments for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. They were deployed on the basis of national consent and had demonstrated their ability to defuse tensions. In view of the vital role played by special political missions, stronger partnerships were needed between them and regional and subregional organizations. South Africa welcomed initiatives to make the relationship between the Security Council of the United Nations and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union more effective: the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security was a strategic step in the right direction.

64. The system for funding special political missions must be improved; the creation of a separate account would not only increase predictability and transparency but would accord special political missions the recognition they deserved as a unique conflict-resolution tool. Those missions should be financed through the same criteria, methodology and mechanisms used to fund peacekeeping operations. That would make special political missions more agile in their deployment and in the execution of their mandates.

65. Ms. **Hattrem** (Norway) said that preventing and resolving armed conflict and sustaining peace should be a top priority for the United Nations and that special political missions merited full support as the most operational part of the Organization's political efforts in the field, where their importance was clearly demonstrable in such places as Afghanistan, Colombia and the Syrian Arab Republic. Over the previous decade, demand for such missions had increased owing to their comparatively low-cost effectiveness in the field. It was therefore regrettable that no agreement had been reached concerning a solid and adequate funding and backstopping framework for special political missions, even though such a solution would save United Nations resources.

66. His delegation welcomed the proposed restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar, and stressed that a holistic approach to the Organization's whole range of peace and security engagements was needed. The Secretary-General's commitment to reform in the areas of management and development, as well as the area of peace and security, was encouraging. Norway looked forward to hearing the views of other Member States on how the effectiveness and coherence of special political missions could be enhanced, and to working with Member States from all regions in support of the ongoing reforms.

67. **Mr. Kazi** (Bangladesh) said that the Secretary-General had made a compelling case for realigning the mandates and priorities of special political missions as part of his prevention agenda and in the context of overall reform. The Government of Bangladesh welcomed the emphasis on the field, which would hinge on comprehensive field mission support, further delegation of authority to field-based missions and ensuring accountability of field management. Special political missions needed predictable and sustainable resources to enhance their contribution to sustaining peace and, to that end, a separate account and budgetary cycle should be created for such missions. Priority should be attached to sound political analysis, early warning and technical expertise, with missions carefully calibrated to country contexts. However, it remained to be seen whether such data were being used effectively by the Security Council in formulating policies to prevent the outbreak, recurrence and escalation of conflict. The enhanced role envisaged for the Peacebuilding Commission in sustaining peace should be better leveraged to address that issue.

68. The women, peace and security agenda should be mainstreamed in relevant special political missions and efforts should be made to ensure gender balance as well as equitable geographical representation in the composition and staffing of such missions. The good practices employed in Colombia should be replicated in comparable contexts. The safety and security of personnel in volatile environments was an ongoing concern and would also require regular review. Budgetary provisions were needed to enable special political missions to implement appropriate and cost-effective mitigation efforts in high-risk settings.

69. His Government regretted the withdrawal of the position of the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Myanmar in 2016, which had seriously impeded the efforts of the United Nations to engage with the authorities of Myanmar in the current crisis. In the wake of the reported atrocities committed by Myanmar security forces and vigilante groups in northern Rakhine State since August 2017, his delegation urged Member States to adopt the draft resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (A/C.3/72/L.48), which stipulated the appointment of a special envoy of the Secretary-General on the situation in Myanmar. All concerned must work to facilitate the safe, dignified,

voluntary and sustainable return to their homes or places of origin in Rakhine State of all those forcibly displaced into Bangladesh, with their citizenship and other rights restored. The appointment of a special envoy was aimed at seeking a peaceful solution to the ongoing Rohingya crisis, consistent with the road map outlined by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. The discrepancy between the words and actions of the State concerned and the continuous exodus of Rohingya into neighbouring Bangladesh called for sustained engagement by the international community.

70. **Mr. Belkheir** (Libya) said that his country had learned a great deal about the strengths and shortcomings of special political missions from its long experience with them. Since its establishment in 2011, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) had helped the Libyan authorities conduct successful legislative elections in 2012 and 2014 and had provided Libyan officials with training in the rule of law, landmine removal and human rights. However, the Mission had failed to address certain challenges in the manner required of it. Although UNSMIL had been established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2009 (2011), which explicitly provided for national ownership, that principle had not been applied strictly. The Mission had issued a number of reports without coordinating with the Libyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant institutions. In particular, the extensive report issued by UNSMIL in December 2016, sensationally titled "Detained and dehumanised: Report on human rights abuses against migrants in Libya", had been drafted without consulting the Government of National Accord, with which the Mission normally cooperated directly.

71. The Mission's growing preoccupation with the issue of the humanitarian conditions of illegal migrants reflected the fact that some Mission staff were more concerned about their home Governments' priorities and the repercussions of the Libyan situation on their own countries than about the human rights situation of the Libyan people. UNSMIL had not even addressed the human rights situation in Libya in a dedicated report, leaving the subject for the Secretary-General to cover in his reports. The Mission's mandate did not give it the right to address singlehandedly the delicate issue of the human rights situation of illegal migrants, to whom his Government, aware of the enormity of their suffering, had granted full rights. Nevertheless, UNSMIL representatives had gone so far as to propose solutions to the humanitarian crisis in improvised statements made before the Security Council. Those unilateral solutions, informed by the views of Mission leadership and the States that were attempting to impose their ideas, violated the rights of migrants. Careful thought should instead be given to addressing the root causes of the presence of migrants in Libya. Human trafficking was a crime against humanity in which traffickers worked through transnational organized gangs in transit countries like his own, as well as in countries of origin and destination.

72. The Mission's use of Twitter and Facebook to relay its official views to the public had diminished the Libyan people's confidence in the role of the United Nations in their country. The Mission should revert to its earlier practice of conveying its opinions on complex matters in measured official statements, in order to avoid further misunderstandings and the unfortunate intermingling of personal and professional views in its social media posts. Furthermore, the actions of certain high-ranking Mission officials, characterized by a lack of neutrality and integrity, had only driven the Libyan people and UNSMIL further apart.

73. A one-size-fits-all approach to support missions must be avoided, given that each society and situation had its particularities. Participants in missions should have knowledge of the local language and the cultural, historical and sociopolitical background of States to which political missions were deployed, as such missions required communication among all parties. In the case of UNSMIL, the language barrier and a failure to take into account the cultural and historical dimensions and the social structure had caused major misunderstandings between the Mission and its local partners. Some UNSMIL officials did not understand Libyan society and were incapable of communicating with its citizens in their language. The Secretary-General should prepare an evaluation report with the help of teams of experts to assess the performance of political missions. Pinpointing the weaknesses of the mechanisms used by political missions would assist the Department of Political Affairs in formulating strategies to address their challenges. His delegation's account of the challenges and weaknesses of UNSMIL should not be construed as disparaging the role of the United Nations or the Mission's efforts; the observations made had merely been intended to highlight the difficulties and the resulting lessons learned under complex, challenging circumstances, in the hope of contributing to the Mission's success.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

74. **Ms. Yee** (Myanmar) said that the Government of Myanmar had made peace and national reconciliation a priority of its nation-building efforts since taking office. With respect to the current humanitarian situation in Rakhine State, the Government was committed to

alleviating the plight of those people and ensuring the immediate return of peace and normalcy to the region. It intended to demonstrate that commitment through action rather than by rebutting criticism with words. Since the terrorist attacks in northern Rakhine State of 25 August 2017, the Government had established a ministerial committee to ensure implementation of the recommendations contained in the report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Specific tasks had been identified, including the repatriation of refugees and the provision of assistance to returnees; the resettlement and rehabilitation of all displaced persons; and the establishment of sustainable peace, stability and development in Rakhine State. To that end, the Government had launched the Union Enterprise Mechanism for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement, and Development in Rakhine, a partnership of Government, civil society organizations, the private sector, local non-governmental organizations, development partners, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organizations. It had also established the Committee on the Union Enterprise Mechanism, to be chaired by the State Counsellor, to oversee the operation of the Mechanism.

75. Among other initiatives, the Government of Myanmar was working with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management, the Red Cross movement and donor countries to expedite humanitarian assistance. It was also harvesting the paddy fields abandoned by those who had taken refuge in Bangladesh and had requested assistance from the World Food Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization to harvest, dry and store the crops, which would be kept until the refugees had returned. Mr. Jeffrey Feltman, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, had recently visited the country, including Rakhine State, and Mr. Haoliang Xu, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, was currently in Myanmar.

76. Myanmar was a least-developed country in the early stages of its democratic process. Despite multiple constraints, including many inherited challenges, it had made significant progress in the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for its people. At that important juncture, unconstructive language and tones would not help solve the issues it was facing. As a responsible member of the international community, the Government of Myanmar would implement all its commitments in good faith and without fail, and it called on all interested parties to be part of the solution, not part of the problem.

77. **Mr. Kazi** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation welcomed the renewed commitment of the Government of Myanmar to address the ongoing Rohingya crisis and to work in tandem with the international community for the sustainable return and rehabilitation of the Rohingya forcibly displaced to Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh had been engaging with the Government of Myanmar in good faith and would continue to do so. Based on past experience, however, it believed that without the engagement of the international community it would be difficult to make much headway in its bilateral efforts. Such apprehensions had already been borne out following recent ministerial-level talks by the two sides. After a 10-point outcome document had been agreed, the most critical element, concerning implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State with respect to the return of the Rohingya, had been either dropped or omitted in the version that the Government of Myanmar had uploaded to social media. The Government of Bangladesh would nonetheless continue to work with the Government of Myanmar to address the crisis. His Government would have appreciated hearing from the Government of Myanmar that it would extend cooperation to the special envoy on Myanmar to be appointed and with other mechanisms in place, and hoped that would indeed be the case.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.